

Dhamma Overview of Buddhism: Study & Practice

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the volunteer and the Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com)

First of all, I'd like to express my delight at the fact that all of you have come to this place in this particular way. Namely, in search of Dhamma in order to use in living one's life and in carrying out one's responsibilities and work in order to get the best possible results in our life and work.

The essential word here is Dhamma and we apologize for having to use this Indian word – 'Dhamma.' However, the meaning of this word is not so difficult for you to understand. Dhamma means all the things that must be known. Dhamma are all the things that must be known, and then the things that must be practiced and the things that we must experience and realize.

Please remember these three meanings of things which must be correct. First, we must be correct in our learning, learning the things that need to be known. Second, we must be correct in using that knowledge. Once we understand, we must practice accordingly. And then third, we must be correct in realizing the benefits that comes from practicing those things. So there's the learning, the practicing, and the realization and all of these must be correct.

Another important thing to understand is that Dhamma is the knowledge of and understanding of all the natures which are compounded or included together in this thing we call 'life.' All the natural things that make up life, this is what we mean by 'Dhamma.' However, many of you are more familiar with the word 'Buddhism' but in fact the proper term is 'Dhamma.' Dhamma in the aspect of

what needs to be learned, Dhamma as needs to be studied and Dhamma or the natural things that need to be realized.

This word ‘Buddhism’ you might as well leave aside someplace as far away as possible. The word we ought to be using is Dhamma. The word ‘Buddhism’ or these ‘isms’ are things that human beings have thought up for themselves. They’re theories and philosophical systems which have been thought up and then which human beings get all caught up in and attached to. But what we are interested in is Dhamma. Dhamma as being the truth of nature. This isn’t something created or thought up by human beings. So you can put the Buddhism aside and we encourage you to get interested in Dhamma as the truth of nature.

Buddhism stresses ‘the Buddha’ or a person whereas Dhamma stresses nature and there’s a very big difference between the two. Here it’s most important to study and get to know the Dhamma which is the truth of nature. Although the Dhamma may be discovered by the Buddha, the thing that’s most important and that we need to know is the Dhamma.

Most of you belong to various faiths, possibly Judaism or Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, or something else. But it’s a fact, that no matter what religion you follow, you are all able to study science, the science of nature. It’s the same with the Dhamma. No matter what religion you profess, you are still able to study the science of Dhamma without any contradictions or conflict.

For example, those of you who are Christians have the Christian responsibility to go to church, in order to worship and pray to God. But now, we can practice or live in line with the law of nature, as being God. This can be our worship of God. The law of nature is the highest God or has the same status or position as God. And for us to live according to that law, in total harmony with it, this is the same as worshiping that natural law. Then we can practice within this body, this body can be our church or temple. By our practicing according to the law of nature, we worship within this church of our bodies, we worship the true God that is the law of nature.

Therefore, you need not fear that in studying and exploring Dhamma that it will conflict with the traditions, customs, and other cultural things of the religion that you follow.

Now, there are a few miscellaneous things we need to discuss – such as this fact that we’re meeting here at 5 a.m. We have chosen the most fitting time for the study of the most profound thing – that is, Dhamma. This time of 5 a.m. is

most appropriate for studying the Dhamma. This time before dawn is very fitting for this because our bodies have had a good rest and our minds are clear and fresh.

At this time, many of the flowers in the forest are opening up, are blooming. And this is the time of day in which the Buddha fully penetrated to the most profound Dhamma. This is the time of day when nature is most ready to understand, to realize the way things are. And this is the time of day when our minds are still free. There's still an openness in the mind where it's possible to add something new. We haven't yet packed our minds full of ideas and problems and thoughts and all that. There's still some openness in which to add something new. Please reflect carefully upon these facts about the benefits of the world of 5 a.m.

You've never used this time in this way before, but we'd like to advise you to give particular attention to the benefits of this time of 5 a.m. So that, instead of using this time to find some pleasure in sleeping, that you learn to get up and use this very special time, not to waste it, until it becomes a habit in your life to make the fullest benefit from this time of 5 a.m.

Another matter is the fact that you must walk here from the meditation center. We'd like this walking to be a lesson that is directly in-line with the principles of Dhamma, which we must learn and practice. In walking here, you ought to *walk without a walker*. Ordinarily when we walk, there is a feeling of being someone who is walking. We generally feel that 'I am' walking, that there is some 'me' who is the walker. This feeling, however, is an illusion. And so we can learn to walk here without that feeling, without that feeling of being a 'me' or an 'ego,' 'someone' or 'somebody.' We can walk, just the natural functions and activities of walking without a walker. This is in-line with the Dhamma principle of doing everything without requiring a doer. All things can be done in a natural way without having to have some 'me' who does them. So in walking here or walking back, we ask you to make it a lesson, the lesson of walking without a walker.

The essential thing here is that we hope you will realize the most fundamental fact of life and of nature – that there isn't anything which is an 'I' or an 'ego' some kind of 'self' or 'soul' – or what in the Pāli language is called *attā* or in Sanskrit, *ātman*. All of these words are common in human speech and thought. But the thing they refer to doesn't really exist. Whether we call it 'self,' 'soul,' *attā*, *ātman*, or simple 'me' or 'ego,' that thing doesn't really exist. This is the most important thing there is to learn about life and we are hoping that you will get to this understanding. If we begin to do things with this understanding, then

it becomes much easier that we will realize the highest benefits from our practice and our life.

The thing we'd like to talk about now in our first meeting is an overview or a bird's eye view of Dhamma as if a bird high in the sky looking down at all the things that are covered by Dhamma and all the Dhamma principles that we need to practice. This will be the subject of today's talk.

As we mentioned already, we must study until we have learned about all the things that must be learned and then we practice correctly all the things that must be practiced and finally, one receives the benefits, the fruits that ought to be achieved. These are the three stages of things we need to know.

If we don't understand, it has the same result as misunderstanding. If we lack knowledge about the way things are, it's the same as if we have wrong understanding. This not-knowing things is called 'ignorance' (*avijjā*). When there is ignorance, then we naturally practice incorrectly. When we don't understand then our actions, our behavior, our way of living is out of line, is incorrect. And when our living is improper and incorrect, then our life is in error – the results of our life are in error. Which means that life bites its owner. So if we don't know things correctly, then our lives will end up biting their owner.

Now, there's an important problem that arises here because of language. In all the languages of the world, the word 'I' is very common. When we talk about knowledge, it's '*I* know.' When we talk about practice, it's '*I* practice.' Even when we talk about the highest understanding, the understanding that everything is not 'me,' not 'I,' we still say that 'I understand that "I" doesn't really exist.' This leads to confusion. In fact, it's not some 'I' or 'me' that understands, it's just the mind. It's the mind that understands, the mind that knows. Equally, it's the mind that, if there's ignorance, it's the mind that doesn't know. So it's simply the mind that understands and acts according to that understanding. So after this we ought to change our way of speaking. Instead of saying that '*I* know,' we should say, 'the *mind* knows.' Instead of saying that '*I* act,' or '*I* practice,' we can say 'the *mind* practices.'

The highest understanding can be put very simply, very directly. The highest understanding is just to know that what this 'I' that we think is 'me,' isn't really 'I.' This 'I' that each of takes to be 'me,' doesn't really exist. There's no real 'I' there, there's no substance that is really some 'I' or 'me' or ego. It's just certain

natural activities and events. This is the understanding that we need to have – that the ‘I’ isn’t really ‘I.’

For example, when the eye, the physical eye, sees a form, or when the ‘I,’ the ego sees a form, is there a difference? Is there a difference between when the physical eye sees the form and when the ego ‘I’ sees the form? If you don’t recognize the difference, then you don’t have any chance of understanding Dhamma.

The ear hears a sound or ego, ‘I,’ hears the sound. The difference is total. Or the nose smells an odor or ‘I’ smell the odor. There’s an incredible difference. Or the tongue tastes some food or ‘I’ taste the food. The difference is very crucial. If ‘I’ taste the food rather than the tongue, then there will arise feelings of deliciousness or not deliciousness. And following that there arises what we call the defilements. But if it’s just the tongue tastes the food, none of these defilements come up. There’s nothing that pollutes the mind. But if ‘I’ taste the food, these low and very dangerous things called ‘defilements’ (*kilesa*) happen. This is the important difference between when it’s just the natural functioning of the eyes, ears, nose tongue, and body of the five senses or ‘I’ keeps happening, ego keeps entering in.

If it’s simply the eye seeing some form, there’s no feeling that the form is beautiful or ugly. But if the ‘I,’ the ego, the self, gets involved, then it ends up being beautiful or ugly. Naturally if it’s just the physical eye seeing, there is nothing beautiful or ugly about it. But as soon as the ego, ‘I,’ the self, comes into play then there is beautiful or ugly and then feelings of positive or negative occur. It’s the same with the ears or the nose, the tongue and the skin. It’s just the natural sense there is nothing positive or negative about it. But as soon as the self, the ego, gets involved, things become positive & negative. We feel that this is positive and that is negative.

When the six sense organs, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind-sense function normally or naturally, then no positive or negative feelings happen and then there aren’t any problems. When we don’t feel positive or negative about experience, then no problems occur. But if the ego comes in, if the self takes over, then the seeing, the hearing, the smelling, and so on becomes ‘I,’ ‘me,’ and then there are positive & negative feelings. And this creates all the problems in life. This is how life bites its owner. If there’s a positive feeling, life bites itself in a positive way. If there is a negative feeling, then life bites itself in a negative way. So the secret then of nature, the secret that we need to see for ourselves, is that

when things function naturally, when the six sense organs function naturally, there's no need for life to bite its owner. But as soon as ego or self comes into play, then life is biting itself. Then what we need to learn to do is how to keep this self from coming in and making a mess out of things. We need to understand how to keep the 'I' the ego out so that life no longer bites its owner.

When the eye sees a form or the ear hears a sound and so on, then we naturally know what the thing is and know how to deal with it. And then we can naturally deal with things correctly without letting any 'me' any self come in. If however we let the ego come in, then there will be positive & negative feelings and then life will bite its owner. So we need to find the understanding that allows us to just see things, hear things, smell things and respond to them naturally without letting it turn into feelings of positive & negative.

The tongue provides a good example. If it's merely the tongue which tastes the food, if it's just the tongue that tastes delicious or not delicious, then there aren't any problems – it doesn't become positive or negative. But if instead of the tongue it's 'I taste the food,' if the 'me' comes in, then it's 'I am delicious,' or 'I am not delicious.' And then this leads to all kinds of problems. If it's delicious that's positive and this leads to liking and loving. Or if it's not delicious, that becomes negative, which leads to hating and anger. These create a lot of conflict, confusion, and a mess is made out of the experience. For example, we get angry at the cook, we want to go and punish the cook for not doing things right. These are some examples of what happens when 'I' tastes the food. If it's just the tongue tasting, if the tongue just feels the deliciousness or undeliciousness in a natural way, there's no problem. But if 'I' feel it, if 'I' taste it, then it becomes a mess.

When we have experienced the thing, the object, the sense object, and ego gets involved and then, positive & negative feelings happen, then a state occurs, a situation occurs which we can call 'Life bites its owner.' There are many different symptoms to this condition of life biting its owner. We'd like to mention some examples of these symptoms.

The first symptom of this biting is called 'love.' Love is something that all of you know very well. If we get involved with some positive thing in a foolish way, then this thing called 'love' happens. And the more we misunderstand the thing, or the less we know it, the more love there is. And this love burns us in a very deep and profound way, such that often we don't even recognize the burning that is taking place. So this love is the first kind of biting that happens.

Now the second one is in the negative way and it's the opposite of love. Namely, anger. Now all of you have been angry enough to know what anger is like. So go back and take a good look at anger, study it carefully until you see how much it burns. Anger then is the second kind of biting.

The next is anger and fear, which are also in the negative direction. These are very familiar emotions for all of you, hatred, and when you hate something then you fear it. You all ought to know what these are like. Now we need to study these things as they really happen, to study hatred and fear in themselves, in order to see how much they burn, see how much they bite their owners.

Love is a wet kind of fire. Anger is a very dry, parching fire. Hatred and fear are dark fires. The wet fire burns in one way, the dry fire burns in another, and the dark fires burn in yet another way. To study about these things from scriptures or from lectures, even this one, isn't enough. You need to study the things in themselves, when they actually happen, in order to understand them and be able to deal with them correctly.

The next pair are longing after things which have passed and worrying about the future. Once again these are things which you all know very well. To study from your own experience is much better than us trying to tell you about these things. So get to know from your own experience how longing after the past and worrying about the future, how these bite us, how these burn us, or how they burn you.

Next is excitement, to be excited by something that's happening now. It inspires us, it stimulates us, and we get excited. Now this excitement is another kind of fire, it's another kind of biting. When there isn't any excitement, then there is happiness.

Next is envy. Envy is not wanting anybody else to be equal to us, or as good as us. Envy is trying to prevent others from being able to compare with us or even to compete with us. Whenever envy occurs, it automatically bites and burns us. Consider what life would be like if there were no envy at all.

Then there's jealousy. Jealousy is not wanting to share something. It's a kind of stinginess and it gets very strong when it has to do with sexual matters, when we are jealous about our lovers or husbands and wives. Then it becomes a sexual possessiveness which can become very strong. It gets so strong that people will even kill because of it. This is how seriously we take these things that we'll even kill for them. Needless to say, such jealousy bites its owner.

These are just some examples, these 10 things. There are many more that we could give. But for our purpose here, just to mention these examples is enough. If we just let our feelings go, until they turn into positiveness and negativeness then life will be bitten in all these different ways, by love, anger, hatred and so on.

People love the positive and hate the negative without even realizing that the positive bites its owner just as much as the negative, as we've already explained.

Now all of these things happen because we lack correct understanding, about nature, about life. So we need to develop right understanding until we know things as they really are so that this feeling of self, of ego, of 'me,' doesn't happen. And then it doesn't stir up the positive & the negative and all these problems. And when we don't let any of that happen then life is totally different. Instead of being bitten all the time by these various defilements, life is free, life is peaceful and cool.

And so it is that we've completed the first aspect of our bird's eye view of Dhamma. That if we are unable to control the feelings of 'me' and 'mine,' we can't stop the ego, and then it stirs up these positive & negative feelings. And the result of that are these different kinds of biting which we have mentioned.

The second matter that we don't know but need to know is called *paṭicca-samuppāda* (dependent origination). We've already examined how we must suffer, how there is pain in life because of this attaching to things as 'me' and 'mine.' This is how *dukkha* (suffering, pain) occurs. So the second matter we need to understand is this dependent origination of the pain.

This story of dependent origination is the same as the things we've mentioned earlier. It's not enough to study about it in books or from having somebody else explain it to you. To really study dependent origination, you must study it within yourselves. You must study it within the things actually happening in you, in your ordinary life.

The ABCs of dependent origination are that within us, there are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. And outside of us are the forms, sounds, odors, tastes, touches, and mental objects. There are six inside and six outside and these two sets of six are always ready to interact.

The first pair is the eye and the form and when the two inter-react, or when they *paṭicca*, when they depend upon each other. When they depend upon each

other, a third thing happens and this is called ‘eye-consciousness.’ Eye-consciousness is knowing the form via the eye. So when the eye and the form, interact, then eye-consciousness happens. Now this consciousness didn’t exist previously. It just occurs after the eye and the form interact.

Now when these three things are working together, once eye-consciousness is arisen, then there are the three things and as they function together, this is called *phassa* (contact).

When the eye makes contact with the form through the tool of eye-consciousness, then this is called ‘contact,’ this is sense-contact. And this contact is a very dangerous thing with which we must be very careful.

Now when this contact happens, if there isn’t correct understanding, if there is a lack of right knowledge, then the contact is stupid or we can call it ‘ignorant contact.’ And if the contact or this seeing is ignorant, then it gives birth to feelings which are ignorant. Positive & negative feelings happen because of the ignorant contact. And these positive, negative feelings are also stupid – from stupid contact there arises stupid feelings.

In the opposite case, there is intelligence, there is real understanding, and then the contact is no longer stupid or ignorant. We can then call it ‘wise contact.’ And the feelings that arise due to that contact are also wise. If there’s nothing stupid about the feelings, then the feelings aren’t taken to be positive or negative. And then no love, anger, hatred, fear, worry or any of those other fires ignite.

When the contact is foolish and then the feelings are foolish, next there happens a kind of wanting, which is equally foolish and ignorant. It’s a kind of desire. Rather than correct aspiration regarding this situation, there’s a blind or stupid desire about it and this is where all our problems begin.

When there is this ignorant, blind desire, it gives birth to thoughts of ‘me’ and ‘mine.’ When we ignorantly desire something, then we interpret that desire to be ‘me’ or ‘mine.’ Now, these thoughts, ‘me,’ ‘mine’ didn’t happen before the desire, as many people think ought to happen. But in fact, there is first the desire, and then the ‘I’ who desires. This thought that there must be some self or ego that desires comes after the desire. And now things are getting really bad, they’re really turning into a mess.

If you’ve been following what we’re talking about, then you will have seen that what we call ‘self’ or ‘ego’ comes later. It’s not there from the start. A lot of

our theories or beliefs about the world involve some ego or self that is there all the time. But if you're understanding, if you're observing what we're discussing now, then you'll see that the ego, the self, the 'me,' the 'I,' the soul, happens after there is this sense contact, the seeing, the hearing, or whatever. It's only after the eye sees the form, or the ear hears the sound, the nose smells the odor and so on, it's only after this activity takes place that the reaction of self, of ego, happens. And so you can see that self, ego, soul, is just an illusion. It's a delusion created out of our ignorant thinking. You can't find something, some real thing, actually happening, some real thing that is the self, we just create the thoughts about self out of our confusion.

So this here is the thing that you need to understand and be able to stop. If you can, then there is just the natural functioning of the nervous system and that natural functioning doesn't create any problems. We've been explaining how through ignorance, we take the natural activity of the nervous systems, for example the eyes seeing a form, the ears hearing a sound, the nose smelling an odor, the tongue tasting flavors, the body experiencing touches. Through ignorance, we turn that all into 'me,' into ego and create many problems out of it. But if you understand this, then the opposite takes place. There's simply the natural functioning of life. This is exactly the lesson we were talking about in your walking over here from the meditation center and in walking back. *To walk without a walker.* Walk here, walk back, without allowing this illusion of 'me,' of ego, to interfere. Just let there be natural walking, natural functioning of the body and mind, natural sensing of the nervous system, without any of the illusion and confusion of 'me' and 'mine.'

Now once there is the desire it then leads to the 'desirer,' to thoughts that there is someone who desires, which is called 'attachment' (*upādāna*). And then attachment next leads to *bhava* (becoming, existence). Once there are the thoughts of some someone who desires, these grow into, they become a self and then this self exists fully. This is a kind of hallucination which deceives and tricks us. There's nothing really there, but the hallucination is so vivid that we really believe in it and run our lives according to this hallucination. So this hallucination tricks us, it haunts us, worse than any horror movie we've ever seen.

Now once this becoming or existence which arises out of attachment develops fully, something gets born. There is what we call 'birth.' The self is now fully born. It's born as ego. And then when this ego has been born, all the forms of pain, of suffering that we mentioned earlier happen. All those ten kinds of biting

and burning that we mentioned a while ago can only happen when there's someone born. If no one is born, then love, hatred, fear and all that, can't happen to anyone. But as soon as someone is born, all those kinds of burning and biting have a subject. So all these kind of problems happen because of the birth of 'someone.'

Now the essence of what we've been talking about is that if contact takes place, if the eye sees a form or the ear hears a sound and there is ignorance, then the contact is foolish or stupid and then the feelings that happen because of that contact are equally foolish. And then these positive & negative feelings stir up desire. Desire leads to attachment and out of attachment, the ego, the self is born. And when there is self, all the different kinds of pain and misery, the burning and biting, can happen. Now all of this only can happen if there is ignorance at contact. If we experience things without understanding them properly, then all this pain and misery will occur. If on the other hand, there is contact without ignorance, if we're fully aware and understand the situation correctly, then there's no ignorance and then none of these problems, none of this pain and misery gets concocted.

Now what we've been pointing out in these last few minutes goes by the name of *paṭicca-samuppāda*, 'dependent origination.' This is a stream, or a current of dependent origination, of things arising dependent upon other things. And as each, out of some kind of dependency, some things arise and then dependent on those, further things arise and this flows, this current or stream flows on as long as there is ignorance. All of this is called 'dependent origination' and this is the second matter of our bird's eye view.

Now if you fully understand this matter of dependent origination, then all your problems will disappear and this brings us to the third aspect of the bird's eye view. Most of you are not able to be intelligent at the point of contact. For ordinary people, whenever there is seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and so on, this experience is dominated by ignorance, and then the dependent origination keeps happening and there is lots of pain and suffering. This brings us to the third matter which is how to develop the awareness and intelligence that will stop those problems from happening.

So this third matter is the training of mindfulness, training awareness and recollection, to be fully present with everything we do or what in Pāli is called *sati*. Now the difficulty of training *sati* is that it's not very easy to do. But the fact that it can be a bit difficult does not mean it's impossible. We can compare it with

learning to ride a bicycle. When, as a young child, you learned how to ride a bicycle, it was not very easy. And we had to suffer the pains and bruises of falling off a number of times until we finally got it. Although it was not difficult, it was possible, and most of us now are able to ride bicycles. It's the same with training sati or mindfulness. When we begin, we will continually fall off and falling off can be quite frustrating – sometimes we even want to cry. But if we persevere in the same way we did with learning to ride a bicycle, then we'll start to get the hang of it. At first it'll be very shaky, but if we keep trying, we become more and more skillful. It might be difficult, but the training of mindfulness is not impossible. It's a matter of whether we persevere or not. If we keep trying, we'll eventually get it.

When people learn to ride bicycles and don't get it right away, they don't give up. Just because they don't get it right off the bat, doesn't mean that they give up. They keep trying until they learn to do it. But with training mindfulness, with practicing mindfulness with breathing in and out, many people after trying once or twice give up and run away. Just because they don't meet with immediate success they give up and turn tail. So we need to have the same attitude as when we learn to ride a bicycle. Although it may be difficult, although we may not get it at first, although it may take days or weeks or even months, it doesn't mean that we should give up and run away. If we do persist, if we get in there and fight with our unruly minds, then eventually we'll get the hang of it.

Now when we train mindfulness through mindfulness with breathing (*ānāpānasati*) there are four main areas of study and practice. First is the body, the physical body including the breathing. Second are the feelings, which arise towards the body, sometimes pleasant, sometimes unpleasant. Third are the minds, the states of mind that happen. And last are nature, nature being all the things we cling to and attach to as being 'me' and 'mine.' These are the four areas of study. We study and practice with the body until the body is under control so we've mastered the body. Then we move on to the feelings, the positive & negative feelings which arise towards the body and we investigate these until we can handle them. And then we move on to the mind, to all the kinds of mind, until they are all within our control so that we can have the kind of mind that we require. And lastly, we get to the point where we can control all the different natures. Generally, these natural things deceive us – they trick us into attaching to them, into grabbing onto them as being 'me' and 'mine.' But once we've seen them for what they really are, they no longer have the ability to trick us and this

is the fourth thing we need to do. So with these four areas we study until we have mastered all four of these things. This is the basic structure or framework for *ānāpānasati*, mindfulness with breathing in and out.

The first area regards the body or the Pāli word here is *kāya*. *Kāya* means ‘things which are gathered in a group,’ which is the same as the English word ‘body.’ ‘Body’ means collection or a group of things. And we need to investigate and train with these things which are collected together into a physical body until this body doesn’t pose any more problems for us.

We need to bring this body under control and we do this by using the ‘breath body.’ The breathing is not just one thing but it’s a collection of many things. And we can use this ‘body of the breathing’ to control the rest of the body. We do this by calming the breathing, by making the breathing more and more refined and calm, by making it increasingly peaceful. Then it will bring the rest of the body under control. It will calm the body. The details of how to do this will be explained to you later by your instructors and trainers at the meditation center.

Once we’ve been able to get the body under control so it’s no longer creating problems for us, then we go to the feelings (the *vedanā*). The *vedanā* usually come in two basic forms – positive feelings & negative feelings. Most people don’t recognize that these feelings are problems. Whether positive or negative, these feelings create problems for us. And so we need to study them until we’ve got them under control. ‘Under control’ means that they no longer bring up any trouble for us.

The highest kind of feeling is satisfaction. At first, satisfaction is rather coarse, which we call ‘rapture,’ it’s rather ecstatic. But then this can be refined and this becomes much calmer which is then called *sukha* (happiness, bliss). We need to study these until we can defeat them. If we are not careful these positive feelings will trick us and will defeat us. But if we understand them thoroughly, then we can defeat them. We’ll get them under our control rather than the other way around.

In short, we need to prevent these feelings from enslaving the mind. We can use the word ‘us’ or ‘we’ but it’s more correct to use the word ‘the mind.’ If we’re not careful, these feelings will enslave the mind. But if we practice properly, then the feelings won’t be able to enslave the mind and then mind is free of the power of those feelings, whether they be positive or negative.

Next is to train the mind itself. This mind is the center of everything. It's where all things happen. Now if the mind isn't yet under control, then it makes all kinds of mistakes and errors. And so the thing now is to train the mind, or more correctly the mind trains itself. There's no 'us' separate from the mind that trains the mind. It's just the mind trains itself. And it's trained when it no longer makes any mistakes.

So, to train the mind is to bring it under its own power. You can say 'so the mind is under our power' but 'us' or 'we' is nothing other than the mind. The mind trains to know all the different positive & negative states that it can enter. And then the mind trains to make it feel most satisfied and content. The mind is trained to be very concentrated and focused, very stable. Lastly, the mind trains in letting go, letting go of all the things that it grabs onto. These are different ways of training the mind until it's under its own control.

This mind that has been highly trained can be described by three words. When it's well-trained, first of all it is clean. This mind has been cleansed of anything dirty or defiling, which disturbs the mind. And then when there is nothing disturbing the mind, it is very stable, in other words, clear. First it is calm, and then it is clear. And when the mind is clear, this stability leads to calmness or great peace of mind. So the well-trained mind is clean, clear and calm.

This well-trained mind which is clean, clear and calm is the mind that is most intelligent. This is the mind that can see things as they really are. Whatever it looks at is seen correctly in accordance with the truth of these things. So this is the mind that is able to let go of all the things it attaches to. Normally, the foolish mind is grabbing onto things, clinging to things. But the mind that sees all these things correctly, lets go of them, it releases them. This is the fourth level of training the mind.

So, there are these three matters which make up our bird's eye view of Buddhism. First, are the various harmful states which bite and burn us because we are careless in how we live, these positive & negative feelings arise which leads to the love, the anger, the hatred, the worry and so on which bite us. The second matter is that of dependent origination, which is the understanding of how that biting and burning occurs – until we understand that fully. And the third is training mindfulness or sati to the point where we are fully able to control the flow or stream of dependent origination. These are the three things which make up our bird's eye view of Dhamma. We've just given a rough outline of them. It remains for the instructors at the meditation center to explain the details and then,

as they are explained, you can investigate each of these things personally. We hope that you will be very interested in them, so that you can benefit from Dhamma.

Finally, we'd like to thank you for being good listeners. We thank you for your attention. We hope now that you can begin to put these things into practice, especially in walking back to the meditation center. Please investigate the lesson of *walking without a walker*. Walk with a mind that is above all problems. Walk with a mind that is free. That ends today talk.

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Transcribed by Jessica (jess.haines8@gmail.com) in Sep. 2015
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